

# Rafiqul Hossain's Poem

## **Roving minstrel of the night**

When the news headlines were Gohpur Nellie...

O' roving minstrel  
Along which pathway have you come  
At the dead of night

Whose scream of a burnt hut have you brought  
Bound in your broken lute

The moment you open your mouth  
The ashes of burnt flesh come flying

Where've you lost your river akin to a blue eel  
And your canopied boat

How'd you get across the river

O' roving minstrel  
At the midday hour

On which frontyard would you sing pouring out your soul  
The starlit songs of a blue heart

Where're your eyes your tongue  
Who's snatched away your tongue and eyes  
Can you recall where

Recall which boatman had rowed you across  
Recall in which locality you were stripped naked  
Who'd snatched away those priceless tunes  
From your golden throat  
Recall

Where's your river akin to a blue eel  
And the canopied boat  
Recall

At this hour of the night you've come  
With the scream of a burnt hut  
Bound in your sole crutch – the lute

For a while you'll again be inebriated in limerence

O' roving minstrel

Where's such an abode in this serenity a river  
Akin to a blue eel in this placidity

In the forest where'd you find a house  
Plastered with the heart's blood  
Within the rocky heart where'd find a gracious repository-river

O' roving minstrel  
Still you're here standing at this dead of night

Perhaps you'd know better  
In what manner should your lute be played  
To bring out again

The oriole-like sunlight's oriolic tunes

*Translated by Krishna Dulal Barua*

**Rafiqul Hossain** (b.1954-d.2026) was an Assamese poet, playwright and theatre artist. He has published five collections of poems.

**Krishna Dulal Barua** is a prominent translator and writer based in Nagaon, Assam. He received the Katha Award for translation in 2005.